

The last word

Jump Cut history and production

by the Editors

from *Jump Cut*, no. 5, 1975, pp. 27-28

copyright *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, 1974, 2004

We are shifting JUMP CUT's business office to Berkeley. Production and distribution will remain in Chicago. This shift does not represent a change in editorial policy or editing procedures: Berkeley and Chicago will continue as editorial offices of equal status. We have made this division of labor in order to balance the work load which had subtly accumulated in Chicago. At the same time, we would like to take the opportunity presented by this announcement to give a short history of JUMP CUT and to try to open up the inner workings of our editing procedures. In the bourgeois press these procedures are kept hidden to maintain the authority of the editors and to present to the public a commodity from which all signs of the work that went into its production have been excised. Style (the way things look, the way they are done, the decorative aspects) in bourgeois production is most often the personal or institutional form of this excision.

Chuck Kleinhans, Julia Lesage, Judy Hess, and John Hess all left graduate school—Indiana University—in 1973. Bill VanWert left the next year. Julia, Judy, and Bill all have fulltime teaching positions. Since leaving Indiana, John has been working on his dissertation, writing, and going to political meetings. Chuck has worked in a grassroots community organization, has a part-time job as a school bus driver, and writes. Both of us have also been living the exciting lives of semester-by-semester part-time college teachers. In January, 1974, with the invaluable financial, moral, and intellectual support of Judy, Julia, and Bill, we decided to start JUMP CUT. Without extensive preplanning or much discussion of the nitty-gritty mechanics of bringing out JUMP CUT six times a year, we rode our enthusiasm and our desire to remain part of the growing radical intellectual community into print.

As we received more and more writing from outside our group, we ran into various conflicts in joint editing (all final copy has to be approved

by both of us). We discovered we differed on what we considered radical and political, on what we wanted JUMP CUT to be, on what kinds of writing styles we were willing to accept or encourage. Because we believe JUMP CUT is not just another film publication, but a significant product of our and others' intellectual political work, our differences involved more than personal taste. We saw it was necessary to struggle with our differences, and not just ignore them, patch them over, or allow them to remain seemingly personal.

Because personal interaction was difficult from Chicago to California and back, our political differences often took on a very personal flavor. Cooperative work habits are not exactly fostered in graduate school and we were not semi-employed by choice. But we wanted to do it, we had the support of friends and companions, we had a political perspective on how people tend to interrelate under capitalism. So, because we lived too far apart to sit down and hash it out together until our year end meeting in Chicago, we did the next best thing. We sent very thick letters and very long tapes flying between the Golden Gate and the Windy City.

In October we began an internal education program, for which we are reading and discussing a variety of texts on Marxism, Marxist aesthetics, and the history of the left. By discussing specific political texts, we have begun to disentangle our political and personal differences. We have gained a much better sense of where the other person is coming from and established a rapport that did not exist before. Finally, over Christmas and New Year's, Julia, Chuck, and John had the opportunity to discuss JUMP CUT's past, present, and future in Chicago. We'll report on that in the next issue.

While we have always agreed on most of the copy that has been submitted, our differences have become most clear in the case of articles on formal experimentation and articles themselves written in an experimental way. For example, Chuck strongly recommended the article in this issue by Barbara Martineau and John just as strongly opposed printing it. After much struggle, we decided to publish the article with a reply by John. We hope our practice in this case will not intimidate present or future contributors. It is not something we foresee doing very often. We would never do it without detailed discussion and correspondence with the contributor.

We hope our differing views and their expression throughout JUMP CUT will spur on the growth and development not only of our own thinking about art and politics but of JUMP CUT itself. To encourage the participation of our readers in this process, we initiated "Critical Dialogue" in our last issue. The dialectical exchange between us and the input of our associates, contributors, and readers will determine where we go. Obviously JUMP CUT neither has nor wants a rigidly defined political line. JUMP CUT is by no means a finished product but a work

in progress. Indeed, we very consciously consider the first two years an experimental period; we want to define ourselves over time and through our practice. We see our articles and JUMP CUT itself as part of a general inquiry into the nature of a radical political critique of our crumbling, oppressive culture and society and into the possibilities for changing them. We have come to see our own arguments not as divisive but as part of an ongoing struggle toward ideological clarity in the cultural realm of the great movement toward socialism in this country and in the world.

Even before our political differences became a significant problem, we saw that our unbalanced structure produced an unmanageable burden on Chuck in Chicago. Since he had had previous experience in the underground press, he took charge of layout and printing. But since no conscious decision was made to situate other major tasks, correspondence, books, sales, in California, they rapidly accumulated in Chicago. Since most of the tasks were centered in Chicago, so was most of the power. Without clearly recognizing it, this structural imbalance contributed to personal conflict too. The unbalanced work load led inevitably to late publication, which Chuck began to see as a personal failure, as we are so well trained to do in this society. The delegation of tasks from Chicago to California only underlined the concentration of power in Chicago and intensified the conflict rising out of our differing political views.

Finally, we realized that we had to balance the work load by changing the faulty structure. Thus the business and sales office will be in Berkeley and the production office will be in Chicago. It disappoints us that because we live so far apart, a collective arrangement is impossible. It disappoints us too that because Judy, Julia, and Bill have demanding teaching jobs. We have to have a rather traditional hierarchical structure—two editors who do the main work and make the major decisions and three associates who contribute money, articles, advice, moral support, and do editing when they can. Fortunately, we now have two excellent assistant editors who are learning the editorial and production work of JUMP CUT.

1974 was a difficult year for all of us, but it was not without lessons and growth. On-the-job training would be the best description of our working methodology for the first four issues of JUMP CUT. Now that we have it together a little better, things should go more smoothly—you should get your JUMP CUTs sooner (although the postal service is clearly not on our side in this matter). We are now being indexed, perused, discussed, and recommended. This gives us less pleasure than do all the great people we have met in person or through the mails in the last year. We're finding out a lot about films, the uses of films, the problems of filmmakers, and about how to edit a film magazine jointly. It also pleases us to discover that putting out an intelligent radical

publication is fairly easy, unless you want to look like Time. It takes huge media industries to distort the truth about reality while small groups of committed people all over the world successfully present an alternative.

We all hope our readers will have a good year despite Rocky Ford. That might sound funny or even perverse considering the suffering unleashed by the insane and irrational gyrations of the capitalist economic system. But we describe a good year as one in which more and more people unite to change the society that torments them. Marx spoke to all intellectuals, teachers, critics, artists, and students when he said that while previous philosophers had interpreted the world, our task is to change it. Have a Happy New Year!

[To top](#) [Current issue](#) [Archived essays](#) [Jump Cut home](#)